



*A century after American business interests overthrew their monarchy, Hawaii's Na Kanaka Maoli demand autonomy and ancestral lands*

## Native Hawaiians Call for Sovereignty

By Sally-Jo Bowman

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HONOLULU, HAWAII

IN mid-January Honolulu will step back a century with a re-enactment of the 1893 overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy. The event was accomplished by a group of mostly American businessmen, bolstered by a contingent of United States marines called out by the US minister to the kingdom.

For Na Kanaka Maoli – the native Hawaiian people – the scene near Iolani Palace will be no mere curious piece of theater. Rather, it will be an enactment of living history that remains an unresolved issue. It is part of a growing call to restore political sovereignty to the largest group of indigenous people in the US still not recognized by the federal government.

The Hawaiians also plan a series of vigils Jan. 15 to 17. This month not only marks the centennial anniversary of the coup d'etat, but it is also the beginning of the International Year of the World's Indigenous People, as proclaimed by the United Nations.

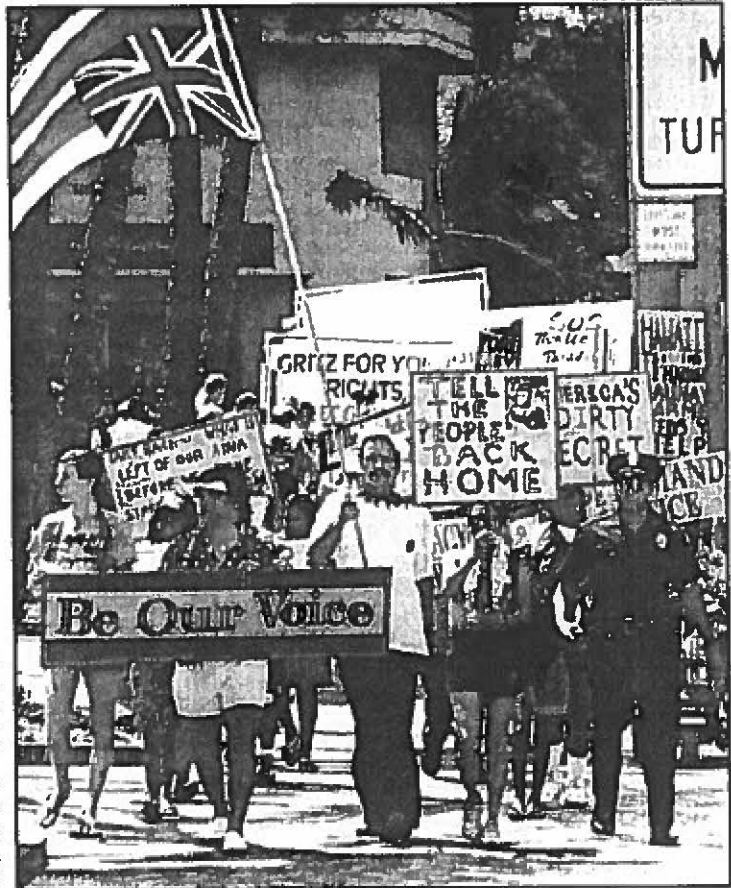
A decade ago, the few Hawaiians who

publicly advocated native sovereignty in the 50th state of the US were dismissed even in the Hawaiian community as the radical fringe.

Today, the idea has the backing of dozens of native groups with memberships that include well-educated and articulate lawyers and scholars as well as judges, physicians, and business leaders. Last October, the US Senate unanimously passed a resolution sponsored by Hawaii Democrat Daniel K. Akaka, a native Hawaiian, apologizing to Hawaiians for the "illegal overthrow" of their government.

Other support comes from some of the 84 percent of the state's 1.2 million citizens who are not native Hawaiian. The most powerful of these is Hawaii's senior US senator, Daniel K. Inouye, a man of Japanese ancestry and the Democrat who chairs the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs. Senator Inouye has repeatedly said he supports the federal policy of self-determination.

Like American Indian nations, Inouye says, Hawaiians "also entered into treaties with the United States, but the native Hawaiian government was subsequently overthrown with the support and aid of the United States government – much like the conquering of the Indian nations. Vast



PROTESTERS: Native Hawaiians and supporters in Honolulu last August urged tourists to carry their message home; the upside-down state flag is an international distress signal.

amounts of land were ceded to the United States by the native Hawaiian government."

In 1893, a small group of white businessmen seeking to maximize and stabilize profits in sugar and related industries expected the US to annex the islands immediately after the usurpers took control of Hawaii. But Queen Lili'uokalani "yielded to the superior force of the United States" under protest and only until such time as the US conducted an investigation and returned her to her throne.

Before Congress could consider an annexation treaty, newly elected Democratic President Grover Cleveland appointed just-retired congressman James Blount to investigate. The Blount report recommended restoring the monarchy, and President Cleveland himself decried the US role in the overthrow. But his call for the US "to vindicate its honor and its sense of justice by an earnest effort to make all possible reparations" languished, and on July 4, 1894, the provisional government declared the independent "Republic of Hawaii."

William McKinley, a pro-annexation Republican, was elected president in 1896. Two years later, the US annexed Hawaii – without a vote of Hawaii's electorate – in a

period of expansionist island-seizing from which the US emerged with control of Cuba and Puerto Rico in the Caribbean and the Philippines, Guam, and Samoa in the Pacific.

With Hawaiian sovereignty went some 1.6 million acres of crown and government lands, which many Hawaiians now want returned as a native land base. It's a sizable amount – about 40 percent – in a state with an area of only 4.1 million acres. Almost 20 percent of the "ceded lands" are in federal use for national parks or military installations. Some of the remaining land under state jurisdiction is used for facilities like the Honolulu International Airport.

Hawaiians also are calling for "back rent" on these lands and for federal grants to fulfill the neglected Hawaiian Homelands program that has awarded as native homesteads only a tiny fraction of the 200,000 acres mandated as a trust by Congress in 1921.

Most of all, native Hawaiians – worst off of Hawaii's people in terms of economics, education, and health – are calling for some form of political self-determination. Ideas of sovereignty range from total independence and return of the monarchy to a "nation within a nation," similar to the status of more than 300 North American In-

### Recent Reading on Hawaiian Rights

BOOKS published in the last two years about the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy and events preceding it, and about 20th century Hawaiian sovereignty, include:

**A CALL FOR HAWAIIAN SOVEREIGNTY**, by Michael Kioni Dudley and Keoni Kealoha Agard (*Na Kane O Ka Maui*, 180 pp., 1991), outlines models of modern Hawaiian sovereignty against the historical background of dispossession.

Island Style Press  
P. O. Box 296  
Waimanalo, HI 96795  
(308) 259 8666

**TO STEAL A KINGDOM: PROBEING HAWAIIAN HISTORY**, by Michael Dougherty (*Island Style*, 200 pp., 1992), outlines Hawaiian prehistory, then focuses on key political figures from the late 1700s to the early 1900s. The author presents statistics on such topics as the decline of native population, missionary real-estate dealings, and how Hawaiians fared when the kingdom adopted Western-style land titles in 1848.

**NATIVE LAND AND FOREIGN DESIRES**, by Lili'ala Kame'olehewa (*Bishop Museum Press*, 424 pp., 1992), analyzes the 1848 land division from the Hawaiian point of view. The author shows how the new land-title system gave Western capitalists access to private ownership of vast tracts and eventually led to the overthrow of the monarchy.

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### FIRST RESIDENTS

*A series of occasional articles on rights of early inhabitants*

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(OVER)

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dian tribes.

Best known and organized of the advocacy groups is Ka Lahui (The Nation). The 12,000-member group, with a constitution, governor, and other officers, aims at economic independence while remaining part of the United States. Ka Lahui has a federal grant of nearly \$150,000 for sovereignty education.

The US Administration for Native Americans also has awarded \$364,000 to Hui Na'auao for the first year of a three-year education program. Hui Na'auao is a consortium of more than 40 groups with a program emphasizing history, the meaning of sovereignty, and the need for disparate groups to work toward consensus.

Organizations of all sorts and of varying membership, from service clubs to church groups and hotel management, have been calling for Hui Na'auao presentations to educate their members.

"Sovereignty is not a new movement," says Hui Na'auao board president and attorney Elizabeth Pa Martin. "It's just been underground. But now it's part of the human rights movement at the international level. Indigenous people all over the world are challenging the legitimacy of colonial and imperial powers. Here in Hawaii, it's been 100 years, and we're still trying to right the basic injustice."

Kekuni Blaisdell, a physician and medical professor, says he is suspicious of any proposals that call for native Hawaiians to remain within US jurisdiction. "It is not for us to secede," he says. "It is up to the foreign power to leave our homeland."

**I**N answer to those who call him radical, Dr. Blaisdell smiles. "I'm conservative," he says. "I'm for conserving our Hawaiian nation which was invaded, lands and treasury robbed by radicals. Those injustices have to be corrected and those criminals brought to trial. The message from American Indians and other indigenous leaders is 'Never trust Uncle Sam.' We have to bring the battle to our grounds with our rules. We are co-equals who will negotiate."

John Waihe'e, the state's first native Hawaiian governor, has a different view. "The overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy was a hostile act, an armed takeover of a legitimate government," he says. "Our challenge is to advocate the rightful restoration of sovereignty to the Hawaiian people. But I am concerned that, in the process of establishing self-determination for Hawaiians, we do not tear apart the multicultural fabric of our contemporary Hawaiian society."

"On the specific form that a Hawaiian government will take, it will be up to native Hawaiians to make that fundamental determination," Mr. Waihe'e says.

Though some had hoped for a such a determination by this year, most say it will be made in 1994 at the earliest, perhaps through a constitutional convention, a referendum, or federal legislation.

No one talks anymore of "if," only of "when."

"The time is now," says Rowena Akana, a trustee of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and chair of its sovereignty committee. "We are a different group of native Hawaiians than the generations before us. We have the advantage of hindsight and the vision of foresight to see the desperate need to change the path of our future if our beautiful culture is to survive and thrive in the decades to come."